

# Presentation of Honorary Fellowships of the Ulster Medical Society

11th December, 1947

IN presenting the Honorary Fellows to the President, Mr. G. R. B. Purce, Professor W. W. D. Thomson said :—

A decade has almost passed away since in this hall I had the great privilege as President of the Ulster Medical Society to install Sir Humphrey Rolleston, Mr. A. B. Mitchell and Sir Robert Johnstone as honorary fellows. Since then no names have been added to that ever jealously guarded list, which, alas, by the passing of these three and of Sir Arthur Hurst, Sir Almroth Wright and Professor T. Sinclair, has been reduced to only two : Sir Thomas Houston, the greatly beloved doyen of the medical profession in Northern Ireland, and Brigadier J. A. Sinton, unique in that he is the only individual to have ever held in his own person the highest military honour—the Victoria Cross, and the greatest scientific distinction—the Fellowship of the Royal Society. The Ulster Medical Society is very proud of its roll of Honorary Fellows, which includes such names as William Stokes, Joseph Lister, William McCormick, George Makins, Peter Redfern, William Whitla, James Lindsay, and Wm. St. Clair Symmers. To-night it is once again my treasured privilege to present to you, Sir, six distinguished colleagues to grace the roll still further. Two are men who have in other schools, by their work and writings, become household names throughout the medical world and who have found time during their busy lives to come to Queen's as Extern Examiners on frequent occasions, often during the war years when travelling was difficult ; four are sons of our own Alma Mater who have in their respective spheres added to the reputation of our medical school, who have taught successive generations of students the art of medicine, and who have deserved well of this society to which in the past they have given generously of their time and experience, and of which they have, each one, occupied the presidential chair.

## PROFESSOR FRANCIS JAMES BROWNE

The other day while sorting out an ancient press I came across a long-forgotten book—a prize for good attendance at Anahilt Sabbath School, which bore a date in the eighteen nineties. It was one of a series of biographies of famous Americans in vogue in those days as prizes or gifts to fire the noble ambition of youth. This one was entitled : “Benjamin Franklin, or From Printing Office to the Court of St. James.” At once I thought how interesting and inspiring a volume could be written : “Francis J. Browne, or From a Club Colliery Practice in Abertillery to a Professorial unit in London”—the story of how Professor Browne made his escape from the shackles of club practice in the Ebbw Fach Valley, a tale unique in these days when the portal to consulting via general practice is but rarely taken.

In the latter years of the nineteenth century, F. J. Browne used to make his daily journey from his home in Tullybogley, near Manorhamilton, to attend the famous seminary, Foyle College, Londonderry. Here he had as school mates, Sam Irwin and Charles Lowry. It is a remarkable fact that three of our new honorary fellows were at Foyle together.

After a careful investigation of the fees of the various medical schools, F. J. left the banks of the Foyle for the banks of the Dee, and qualified in Aberdeen. Leaving the granite city for the coalmines of Monmouthshire, he worked there till the outbreak of the first world war, when he joined the R.A.M.C., contracted dysentery, and was invalided out. We find him next in Edinburgh working for the M.D. The late Mr. J. W. Ballantine was only too glad to welcome so keen a recruit and the invitation was accepted to act as House Surgeon in the famous gynæcological wards, 35 and 36, of the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. He threw himself with enthusiasm into this work and in addition undertook the pathology of the unit—a huge task, but one which laid the foundation for his unrivalled knowledge of gynæcological pathology. During this period he captured the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh; the M.D. of Aberdeen, with highest honours; and a few years later the Doctorate of Science. He was appointed assistant physician to the Royal Maternity Hospital, in charge of the ante-natal department. Some twenty years ago he became Director of the Obstetric Unit and Obstetric Surgeon in University College, London, and Professor of Obstetrics and Gynæcology in London University.

His output of work has been prodigious, and to-day he is the acknowledged British authority on ante-natal care. His textbook "Ante-Natal and Post-Natal Care" has reached six editions and is the holy writ of every student of this subject. On one occasion when C. G. Lowry was giving a demonstration in the Royal Maternity Hospital on albuminuria of pregnancy, he asked a student for a prescription suitable for such a condition. It was given correctly except that, as the flavouring ingredient, chloroform water was suggested. "Well," said C. G., "chloroform water is pretty innocuous, but after all chloroform is a liver poison and we are enjoined 'to abstain from all appearance of evil.' Who said that?" The student replied at once: "Oh, F. J. Browne, Sir."

And so, raised to the level of St. Paul, I ask you, Mr. President, to present to Professor F. J. Browne his triptych as Honorary Fellow of the Ulster Medical Society.

#### JAMES ANDREW CRAIG

Perhaps no area in Ulster has produced from its towns and farmsteads, lashed by the rough salt-laden gales of the Atlantic, more doctors, clergy and schoolmasters than the Route. Even after three centuries the descendants of the Scottish settlers from Argyll and Kintyre maintain their traditional regard for education.

Surely these hard-headed and uncompromising but, withal in time of need, soft-hearted and open-handed Presbyterians from the Route, laconic in speech and intolerant of shams, are the Ulster Scots about whom the late Lord Rosebery said: "When I come to the branch of our Scots race which has been grafted

into the Ulster stem, I take off my hat with veneration and awe. They are, I believe, without exception, the toughest, the most dominant, the most irresistible race that exists in the universe at this moment."

And from this stock sprang James Craig. Coming to Queen's a very young lad, he took the M.B. degree in the old R.U.I. with first-class honours—no mean feat considering the competition was against all Ireland. On that occasion, James Craig and another Route man, Tom Houston, were given "an upper pass" in medicine. In the R.U.I. an upper pass entitled the recipient to sit a second and much stiffer examination for honours in the specified subject. Both had received the tip that syringomyelia was a likely question. Now in those days this disease had but recently been recognised and had not yet reached the standard textbooks. The two lads from the Route agreed together that, if asked about the subject, they would not answer, as they considered the question an unfair one. The tip proved correct, and each in turn, with perfect faith in the other, vouchsafed no answer.—"What's bred in the bone won't out of the flesh." The examiners must have had some sense of humour, or of shame, as both candidates received first-class honours!

Sensing, like a true Ballymoney man, an opening in diseases of the eye, ear, nose, and throat, the mantles of McKeown and Nelson quickly fell upon his shoulders. He was appointed to the staff of the Royal Victoria Hospital, lecturer in ophthalmology at Queen's, President of the Irish Ophthalmological Society, and member of the editorial council of the British Journal of Ophthalmology. His meteoric career was watched with admiration, not unmixed with envy. One late afternoon, shortly after I had put up my plate and was feeling happy, as I had seen a patient and earned one guinea (as the fee for consultation then was), I met Mr. Craig in University Square. We walked together to the pillar-box, into which he inserted a huge pile of letters. As he turned away he said: "A unique event has happened to me this afternoon." From one trouser pocket he took thirteen sovereigns, from the other thirteen shillings. "I have, of course, often seen more than thirteen patients in one afternoon, but never before has each patient paid me with a sovereign and a shilling." My solitary guinea suddenly felt very lonely.

Past students will always remember his uncanny skill in diagnosis and the gentle touch of the master hand in operations of the greatest delicacy. They will repeat tales of his ready wit, a trifle caustic and biting like his native gales, but often un hurtful, being beyond the intelligence of the victim. I like best the story of the medical student, who when asked to draw the optic disc of a patient, produced a weird and unrecognisable sketch. "Ah, I see you are a Cubist," said Mr. Craig. "No," replied the student, "I am a County Antrim man like yourself."

Since his retirement from active duties in hospital and in the university, Mr. Craig seems as busy as ever. During the war he returned to his work in the hospital, giving invaluable aid to a depleted staff. Friday evening still sees him enjoying his game of bridge in the Union Club and Saturday finds him playing his erratic golf at the Royal County Down, of which club he is a past captain.

Mr. President, I present to you James Craig, doyen of the ophthalmic surgeons in Northern Ireland.

## SAMUEL THOMPSON IRWIN

When I first knew S. T. Irwin he was in the full vigour of young manhood. He had established at Queen's a great tradition in sport as an international rugby forward; in scholarship as a brilliant student; in social service as a past president of practically every college society. As the college magazine puts it: "Sam Irwin is the all-round man of Queen's. He turns his hand to everything and with success." I quote again from "Q.C.B.," describing a hard-fought international match: "In the forward ranks Sam Irwin was Sam Irwin and more so: he had a bloody nose and a vengeful look and he played like the international hero he is. We no longer feel any surprise at the impossibility of withstanding the wild rushes of the Irish forwards." In these latter days S. T. Irwin has lived again his rugby days in watching the prowess of his sons and son-in-law, but golf has ousted football as his active pastime, and as captain of the R.C.D. Golf Club he has attained a position of great honour in the golfing world.

Since his now distant student days he has gone from strength to strength, his reputation as a surgeon has grown at home and abroad. To-day he is the leader of the surgical world in Northern Ireland and his work in abdominal surgery and in orthopædics has placed him among the foremost exponents of these specialities.

Probably quite a number in this room, including myself, have had personal experience of his skill and grateful memories of his gentle and sympathetic personality.

Looking back on my long friendship with S. T. Irwin, I think his outstanding characteristic is his imperturbability. Sir Wm. Osler has described equanimity as the greatest attribute a medical man can possess: coolness and presence of mind under all circumstances; calmness amid storm; clearness of judgement in moments of grave peril. In health and in sickness (for he himself has looked death in the face), in work and play, in happy days and in days clouded with anxiety, he has remained calm and fearless, unflinching and steadfast—imperturbable.

1947 has already seen his name appear in the Birthday Honours List as Companion of the British Empire. Before its expiry we honour a great surgeon and a devoted son of Queen's by the award of the Honorary Fellowship of the Ulster Medical Society.

## CHARLES GIBSON LOWRY

C. G. Lowry does not possess the placid nature of his fellow Limavadian. Although like Timothy "from his mother's knee he has known the Holy Scriptures," yet he parts company with St. Paul on the subject of suffering fools gladly. Rather he has adopted as his guiding motto in life: "Prove all things: hold fast that which is good," and he frequently quotes a free translation of this text as rendered by his father: "Always study to do the right thing." To C. G. thoroughness is next to godliness.

Lowry was appointed to the Chair of Midwifery in 1920. At that time only twenty-six beds were available in Belfast for maternity work, and these in a small, antiquated, dark and depressing hospital in Townsend Street. The infant mortality rate in Northern Ireland was a scandal. Ante-natal clinics were unknown. The

after-care of the newly born left much to be desired. Lowry determined that all this must be changed. The story of how this was finally brought about, largely by his vision, wisdom and pertinacity, has been told elsewhere, and to-day the Royal Maternity Hospital stands as a splendid memorial to his tenure of the chair.

Professor Lowry always took the greatest pains in the preparation of his lectures, and generations of students have acclaimed him as a great clinical teacher. His ambition was to turn out good clinicians in whose hands mother and babe would be safe. His students learnt from his example the art of patient history taking and of gentle manual examination. Lowry always insisted upon an exhaustive survey of the whole patient, for he was a great physician before he became a great obstetrician.

I have heard it said that in recent years our medical school lacked among its teachers "a character"—one about whom stories of idiosyncrasies cluster. To me, however, C. G. is "a character," and as long as his old students meet and talk of bygone days, stories of his doings, sayings and Biblical allusions will be repeated and there will be no more popular story than the one of how one hot summer day when the heat in the theatre of Ward 17 was terrific, C. G. asked the sister to telephone to the engineer to have the temperature adjusted, adding: "my compliments to him, and say this theatre is only fit for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego." Sister looked puzzled by this postscript, and C. G. said: "You know who these gentlemen were?" She shook her head. He then asked the entire class, and they all pled ignorance except the last student, who replied brightly: "They sound like three Abyssinians." (Mussolini had just invaded Abyssinia).

Dostoevsky tells us that "the second half of a man's life is made up of nothing but the habits he has accumulated during the first half." And truly C. G. in his seaside home in Ballywilliam seems to justify this sweeping assertion. His gardener complains: "Yon professor of mine keeps me that busy redding up, I have no time to put in"; his scalpels have been but replaced by pruning knives and seccateurs equally sharp and shining; the roots of his cabbage seedlings are steeped in salts of mercury to kill any potential organisms of "club-root"; his seeds are sown in sterilized soil; his fruit trees are sprayed six or seven times every year against every conceivable pest. This meticulous husbandry results in his carrying off the first prize for the best crops in the local show, just as in former times he won first place in the gratitude and affection of the mothers of Northern Ireland.

Some months ago, Professor Lowry, your friends presented you with a striking and life-like portrait of yourself; Glasgow has honoured you by the Honorary Presidency of its Obstetric Society; Edinburgh, by the Honorary Fellowship of its corresponding Society; the Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynæcology has made you an Honorary Fellow. To-night the Ulster Medical Society honours itself by admitting you to its Honorary Fellowship.

#### HOWARD STEVENSON

The centenary of the discovery of the use of anæsthetics in surgery was celebrated this year. In pre-anæsthetic times the most famous and most sought after surgeons were those who handled their knives with the greatest speed and dex-

terity. The measure of a surgeon's skill was recorded in seconds. Although the urgent need for rapidity in surgery is no longer a vital necessity, yet an operation carried out with speed and with apparently effortless manual adroitness always excites the admiration of the onlooker. Such an operator was Mr. Howard Stevenson. A common remark in the east wing of the Royal at lunch would be : "Howard took out a gall-bladder in so many minutes this morning," and someone else would say : "Just wait and time his next thyroid and you will get a surprise."

Although Howard Stevenson never sought or played for popularity, yet he is one of the most beloved members of our profession. He possesses a great gift for friendship. Pupils and housemen vied with one another to belong to his unit in hospital on account of its happy atmosphere. One of his house surgeons happily summed up the matter : "we all adore Howard—he is such a great gentleman."

All through his professional career Mr. Stevenson had a flair for administrative duties. He gave up much time to the secretaryship and chairmanship of the medical staff of the Royal Victoria Hospital and to corresponding offices in the Ulster Medical Society. It was thus natural that parliamentary duties should attract him and he became member of parliament for Queen's. As Chairman of the Select Committee of the Government which inquired into the health services of Northern Ireland and as Chairman of the Health Advisory Council, he has given invaluable services to the welfare of the community.

The medical profession owe him a special debt of gratitude for his quiet, unobtrusive work during the committee stage of the Northern Ireland Health Services Bill. His popularity and influence in the House; his logical explanation to members in the lobbies of reasons underlying the various amendments suggested by the medical profession was of far more value in gaining sympathy and support than long speeches from the floor of the House.

It will give you, Mr. President, very special pleasure to present Mr. Howard Stevenson with the Honorary Fellowship of this Society. For many years you have been happily associated with him in your surgical work in the Royal and you have succeeded him as chief in wards 19 and 20.

#### HENRY LETHEBY TIDY

To-night we follow the injunction of the son of Sirach as handed down to us in Ecclesiasticus : "Honour a physician with the honour due unto him; for the skill of the physician shall lift up his head and in the sight of great men he shall be in admiration; let him not go from thee."

To-night we refuse to let Sir Henry Tidy leave us; a friend well tried; many times our external examiner in medicine; scrupulously just; conscientiously painstaking; we grapple him to Ulster medicine with the Honorary Fellowship of our Society. We honour Sir Henry for his skill as a physician, a skill which as Physician Extraordinary to the King, is available not only to His Majesty, but also, when Physician and Dean of the Medical School of St. Thomas', was given to the humblest of King George's subjects; we honour him also for those qualities of head and heart which Hippocrates tells us every physician should possess—learning, wisdom, humanity and probity.

Henry Tidy is not an easy man to get to know : he does not wear his heart upon his sleeve; he possesses an air of aloofness; he has the power of concealing his thoughts and feelings. Once after an oral examination, a disgruntled student exclaimed : "I might have been playing poker with him for all I could tell by his face whether I was right or wrong." It was only after fourteen years of brief and casual contacts that I discovered the real Tidy. The unmasking took place quite suddenly in 1927, the year when the Association of Physicians first met in Belfast. He was then Honorary Secretary of the Association and came over a few days previous to the meeting to see if our local preparations would pass muster. Business satisfactorily transacted, we motored to Newcastle. That forenoon the Mountains of Mourne were sulky and had hidden themselves in mist. We went to the golf club for lunch. There we encountered some jovial spirits at the nineteenth hole who induced two temperate men to imbibe perhaps not wisely, but too well. But on leaving the clubhouse all inhibitions had been removed. Slieve Donard and Slieve Bernagh revealed themselves in all their glory; the whins shone like gold in the beauty of a bright May day; the real Tidy, chatty, enthusiastic, full of the joy of life, stood enthralled by the beauty of it all; he had become Harry, I—W. D., and so it has remained until this day.

Do you ever ponder how fitting or otherwise a man's name may be as an index of his character? Take, for instance, our President; could any name be more unsuitable than Purce for a surgeon who is often quite forgetful that such an article exists and should be filled? Whereas Sir Henry Tidy fits his name exactly. His mind is like a tidy desk; each paper in its proper pigeon-hole; every fact filed and available at a moment's notice. How else could the author of the "Synopsis of Medicine" keep it up-to-date, edition after edition, or the editor of the "Medical Annual" do the same for it year after year? I cannot vouch for the accuracy of the story told by an old St. Thomas' man that a bet was made and accepted among the house physicians that if Dr. Tidy were to be summoned at 3 a.m. for an emergency in the wards he would not arrive as spick and span as for his ordinary ward round. The bet was lost, for the unconscious subject of the wager arrived shaved and groomed as if for a visit to Buckingham Palace.

Tidy's "Synopsis of Medicine" has become proverbial for its accuracy, conciseness, and comprehensiveness. In the recent educational number of the *Lancet*, however, a story is told, doubtless untrue, of an Indian candidate sitting for the M.R.C.P. in which questions are often asked which cannot be answered straight out of textbooks. This candidate left the examination hall in anger three minutes after the written examination started. On his way out he pounded the question paper with his fist in front of the invigilating censor and exclaimed indignantly : "This is not in Tidy."

Sir Henry, you hold numerous and great distinctions : Physician Extraordinary to the King; Knight Commander of the Illustrious Order of the British Empire; Commander of the Legion of Merit (U.S.A.); Commander of the Order of the White Lion (Czechoslovakia); Major-General and lately Consulting Physician to the British Army; President of the Inter-Allied Conference on War Medicine; Past President of the Association of Physicians of Great Britain and Ireland and of

the Royal Society of Medicine; and Consulting Physician to St. Thomas' Hospital. Only a few weeks ago we in Ulster noted with special interest you had become an Orangeman—Grand Officer of the Order of Orange Nassau. We trust you will treasure the Honorary Fellowship of the Ulster Medical Society as a token of the esteem and affection with which you are held by your many friends in Northern Ireland. Mr. President, I beg to present Sir Henry Tidy.

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## REVIEWS

### AIDS TO DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT OF DISEASES OF CHILDREN.

By F. M. B. Allen. Eighth Edition. 1947. London: Baillière, Tindall and Cox. This miniature textbook, originally written by the late Dr. John McCaw, won for itself a distinguished place in British pædiatric literature, and the present edition is in every way a worthy successor.

The volume continues to lose bulk (a rare virtue in modern textbooks), but remains an authoritative and practical exposition of present-day pædiatric trends. It is well balanced, lucid in expression, and free from obscure theories, and we commend it to the student or practitioner in search of concentrated, accurate, and easily absorbable knowledge.

### ANÆSTHESIA. Pp. 41. 10s.

This quarterly Journal, which is the official publication of the Association of Anæsthetists of Great Britain and Ireland, is still in its infancy, the first number being published in October, 1946—the centenary year of anæsthesia.

Under the able editorship of C. Langton Hewer, it is already proving a great asset to British anæsthetists, who have had to rely mostly on American anæsthetic journals to follow the rapid advance in all types of anæsthetic and analgesic techniques which has taken place in recent years.

It fills a much-needed want in that it provides for a quicker and fuller expression of "recent advances" in anæsthetics, with which neither the textbook nor overloaded columns of the general medical press could cope.

The "abstracts from current literature" is an invaluable section of the Journal, although some of the original papers are over a year old.

There has been a lack of original research work in the contributions so far, but, no doubt, this will be remedied as the Journal gains wider recognition. W. M. B.

### DISEASES OF THE CHEST. By Robert Coope, M.D., B.Sc., F.R.C.P. Second Edition. 1948. Edinburgh: E. & S. Livingstone Ltd. Pp. 508.

The first edition of this book has met with much warm favour, and there is little to add about this second edition.

In spite of its considerable size from the student's point of view, this book is far from tedious, as very many points are explained in very full detail. From the therapeutic standpoint the first edition was well up to date, and there is little fresh comment necessary.

The book includes an atlas of X-ray plates. As in the case of most textbooks, these are positives. I sometimes wonder whether it would not be better to publish negatives, as it is seldom that in our ordinary work it is the positive we study. R. W. M. S.